



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Transportation and Protective Services Subcommittee

“The United States Secret Service: Assessing Agency Challenges and the Path Forward in a New Administration”

June 8, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

The Subcommittee meets today to hold our first Secret Service-related hearing of the 115th Congress. Since this panel was tasked with overseeing the United States Secret Service just this year, I have already come to appreciate the significant contributions this agency makes to the functioning of our government, as well as the challenges it faces in manpower, funding, and morale. Having recently visited the headquarters of the Secret Service with Ranking Member Watson-Coleman and other Members of the Subcommittee, I have seen the incredibly detailed and challenging work the men and women of this agency are accomplishing every day to safeguard our nation’s leaders and ensure the security of America’s financial system. While visiting the agency, I was briefed on investigations aimed at protecting businesses and individuals from financial crimes all across the country, even within the district I represent encompassing the greater Syracuse area.

Not only is this our first Secret Service hearing of the 115th Congress, but it is also the first time Director Alles has testified before us in his newly appointed capacity as head of the Secret Service. For that, we welcome the new director and look forward to hearing more about his vision on how to improve and transform the agency moving forward.

Indeed, most Americans know the Secret Service for its more visible role in protecting the President, Vice President, and their families from threats to their safety. However, the agency also conducts elaborate, in-depth investigations related to financial and cyber-crimes, which cut straight to the heart of the overall homeland security mission of DHS. For example, on March 1 of this year the Secret Service, in conjunction with a number of other federal law enforcement partners, helped facilitate the arrest and indictment of 19 people charged with defrauding 170 people, primarily in the United States, out of more than \$13 million. Further, in November of 2016, the Secret Service conducted the largest-ever seizure operation of \$30 million in counterfeit U.S. currency in Peru.

The purpose for highlighting these operations is to note that these massive investigations were happening at the same time that the Secret Service was experiencing unprecedented strains on its protective mission—protecting such high-profile events as the U.N. General Assembly, a number of last year’s Presidential candidates, the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and the recent Presidential Inauguration. Throughout all of this, the agency has been professional and diligent and for that, I commend the men and women of the Secret Service.

With unprecedented mission requirements and a demanding work environment, it is concerning to see that over the last few years measurements have shown consistent decreases in workforce morale at the agency. Through Congressional oversight, third-party reviews, and internal agency initiatives, the Secret Service has been given a number of recommendations to improve morale, retention, and recruitment. While many of these have been adopted, this hearing will allow the Subcommittee to delve into what more needs to be done to provide the Secret Service with the resources needed to continue fulfilling its mission, adequately staffing operations, and improving morale as we enter a new Administration.

With this new Administration comes new protective missions, challenges, and resource constraints which require Congressional review to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Oftentimes, the Secret Service is an agency that prefers to keep its head down and carry-out its mission diligently away from the spotlight. However, we here on this Subcommittee have a mandate to pay close attention to the successes, challenges, needs, and efforts of the Secret Service.

I hope that the testimony before us today will delve into these issues and inform our work as we commit to working in partnership with the Secret Service. The men and women working to carry out the mission of the Secret Service comprise one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the world—and we owe it to them to be responsible overseers. Whether it be the Secret Service's special agents, criminal investigators, intelligence analysts, counter-assault team, emergency response team, airspace security branch, or electronic crimes task force, we need to ensure that the agency is well-positioned to carry out its critically important mission and enhance the stability of our homeland security enterprise.

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